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## 1 Corinthians 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

# 1 Corinthians 3.

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## Topics.

- Milk, solid food and acting in a human way.
- The hierarchy of Christian churches.
- If anyone's work is burned up they will suffer loss, but will be saved.
- Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw.
- You are God's temple.
- If anyone thinks they are wise let them become a fool that they may be wise.
- The wisdom of this world.

**The previous chapter:** in the previous chapter Paul spoke of the testimony of God, the secret and hidden wisdom of God and of people having the mind of Christ, he talked about a natural mind and a spiritual mind and told the brothers and sisters in the Corinthian church that they should not judge those with a spiritual mind.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian Church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

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## 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-8

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### Milk, Solid Food and Acting in a Human Way.

- **1 Corinthians 3:1-8:** But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, <sup>3</sup>for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? <sup>4</sup>For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? <sup>5</sup>What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup>I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup>So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup>He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labour.

**Flesh:** the word flesh refers to our corrupted, nature with all its sinful dysfunctions and aberrations (anger, jealousy, lustful thoughts, coveting, pride, greed etc.,) that hinder and limit all humans from attaining to God's most Holy standard. its character is always minded to satisfy the demands of ego and pride and at the center of its deeds is self, in modern language it is that part of us that says, "Me first." Whereas the Spirit refers to the higher nature within us, the godly nature that is not only God focused but also others focused, it is that part of us that desires to honour God and the name of Jesus.

**Milk:** refers to teachings that are about disciplining and correcting human behaviour it refers to Scriptures that teach about godly behaviour and attitudes i.e., forgiveness, long suffering, kindness and compassion etc., in contrast to envy, jealousy, pride and exalting and esteeming men etc. It is called milk because milk is the first food a baby child has for its growth likewise the Corinthian brothers and sisters are in Paul's estimation like spiritual infants because of their worldly behaviour, thus his use of the word milk and because developing the fruits of the Spirit is the first step to growing in Christ and honouring God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Solid food:** carries the idea of teaching Scriptures that are not about behaviour, attitudes and human relationships, it is sharing the wonder and splendour of God's promises, His prophetic messages and the return of Christ etc.

**A fantastic chapter:** this is a fantastic chapter since it is practical and covers common problems that are often seen in churches even today. One of the most rewarding things to notice and which will help us all to grow together despite our weaknesses is to notice that even though the Corinthian church is messed up in many ways and its members are still acting very worldly in their behaviour and lifestyle Paul still refers to them as brothers and sisters in Christ, he never cast doubt on their faith but simply views them as spiritual infants in Christ who have never grown up.

**The hierarchy of Christian churches:** there is in the collective mind of most Christian churches an unwritten or unconscious hierarchy of what is considered most important to God. This hierarchy existing consciously or unconsciously in the mind determines the type of teaching most teachers spend their time on.

That hierarchy in the collective mind of most churches has at the top:

- God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Good News of the gospel which leads to eternal salvation.
- Doctrines unrelated to salvation and grace.
- The fruits of the Spirit.

For the global body of Christ to unite in harmony despite its dysfunctions and aberrations I would suggest there needs to be a radical mind shift in the last two levels of this unspoken but very real hierarchy that has been firmly established in the collective mind of many of today's churches.

That change would go like this:

- God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Good News of the Gospel which leads to eternal salvation.
- The fruits of the Spirit.
- Doctrines unrelated to eternal salvation and grace.

If we placed more importance on the fruits of the Spirit than on doctrines unrelated to eternal salvation and grace it would mean when we are sharing with each other differences we would be conscious that it is more pleasing to God for us to show each other grace, patience and mercy and remain in fellowship than it is to argue, quarrel and divide since whether we agree or disagree on these topics we are still both in the family of Christ and still both brothers and sisters in the Lord. If we lived with this consciousness before God and toward each other we could sit down together as brothers and sisters in Christ and have intellectual discussions (howbeit robust) reasoning together in peace, fun and the spirit of adventure discovering God's word in excitement rather than feeling we

have to defend what we already know, attack those who think differently or impose what we believe onto those we are talking to which will sooner or later lead to quarrelling and argument which the Bible calls wisdom from below contrasted to reasoning and discovering together in an atmosphere of peace which the Bible calls wisdom from above.

**Exalting leaders:** following are two dangers in esteeming and exalting a leader:

1. When we exalt leaders, we are not only acting in a human prideful way, but have taken our eyes of Christ the only perfect and High Priest we should exalt and esteem.
2. When we exalt leaders, we are putting expectations and pressures on them that have the potential to cause them unnecessary spiritual and mental battles. This is because they know they cannot live up to such high expectations.

Often when humble leaders (clearly this principal does not apply to prideful leaders) are exalted and put upon a pedestal because of their gifts or brilliant Scriptural knowledge and skills in oratory and success in ministry it can cause within them a feeling of loneliness, this is because they feel that everyone they have a coffee with expects them to be some kind of super spiritual person and not only have all wisdom, but also have all the answers direct from God for all their problems. Unlike most of us who are expected to have flaws in our behaviour and flaws in what we say they feel if they don't live up to the expectations that their followers have of them they are failing them (obviously this does not apply to every humble leader, but it is a principal we should be aware of).

**Perhaps the following testimony will give greater insight:** about forty-five years ago I sat under a married man who had a godly calling on his life that was so great the congregations multiplied daily and money flowed in abundance the growth was so fast that the ministry could not keep up with building programs, by the time they got half way through building a bigger building they needed another one twice the size. Within a few years from this man entering the ministry there was established over two-hundred outreach churches throughout Australia. The congregation exalted and esteemed him as a mighty and holy man of God, this put enormous pressure on him as a leader since he knew in himself that he was not a mighty and holy man of God, but just another human full of the same sinful dysfunctions and aberrations we all have dwelling within us.

Sadly, he eventually fell for a woman and had a secret affair and of course when discovered had to withdraw from the ministry. Many who had exalted him (including myself) were greatly disillusioned and I judged him in my heart as a hypocrite and pretender simply in the ministry for his own pride and fame. About twenty-years later I happened to see this man being interviewed on a current affairs TV program. He of course now much wiser was being asked questions and sharing his testimony. During this interview he said, "The bigger the church became the loner he got." The reason for this sense of loneliness was because not only his leaders, but those he visited had all exalted him to such a high standard they expected him to have answers from God for their troubles.

He just wanted to be accepted as a man with faults and flaws like us all, but felt he had to live up to the enormously high exaltation of his leaders and the expectation his congregation had placed on him and expected from him that when he found a woman who did not exalt him as a holy man of God, but accepted him for who he was he ended up having an affair, it was not about sex, but about being accepted without any expectations. Now being a much older man of course he would not allow this to happen and regrets that it did, but when a person is young and zealous for the Lord they need to be protected from the dangers of success and the dangers of being exalted and esteemed as a human god.

**NOTE:** this does not mean we do not give honour where honour is due, honour and exalting others are on totally opposite sides of each other, to honour someone is to show them respect, encouragement, consideration and appreciation whereas to exalt a person is about idolising another.

**Servants of God:** no matter how great a leader may appear to be or how mighty their gift they should only be seen as servants of God doing what God has called them to do and gifted them with. Everyone from the head to the cleaners are all equal servants before the Lord's eyes and no one in God's Kingdom is exalted by the Lord above another just because they are gifted with a talent, we all admire.

**NOTICE:** Paul says:

- Each will receive his wages according to his labour (v8)

It is not the gift that determines the Lord's reward, but the labour, neither is it the success of the effort or lack of it that Christ rewards, but the effort put into whatever it is that a person is doing to help establish God's Kingdom and those in it.

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## 1 CORINTHIANS 3:9-15

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**If anyone's work is Burned up they will Suffer Loss, but will be Saved.**

- **1 Corinthians 3:9-15:** For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. <sup>10</sup>According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. <sup>11</sup>For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw <sup>13</sup>each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup>If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

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This is fabulous, every brother and sister in Christ should see themselves in this world as fellow workers for God's Kingdom. Paul pictures us like a royal and golden field amongst the world, a majestic building established on Christ the foundation.

**NOTICE:** many others will build on this foundation, it is certain Paul is fully aware that there will be many in the global family of Christ with varying ideas, but rather than condemn them he simply warns them to be careful how they build on the foundation. Paul's mindset toward whoever is in Christ is that they are brothers and sisters in the Lord and should be treated as such regardless of their lack of spiritual growth or worldly behaviour. Paul rather than reject or condemn them focuses his teaching on the fruits of the Spirit (i.e. correct behaviour) rather than prophecy, doctrine and the coming of Christ etc.

**Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw:** the following I believe is one of the most important changes that needs to take place in the mindset of the global Christian community. In most religious denominations I have attended over the past forty-five years almost all teachings of the Bible are counted as being linked to salvation, i.e., if you have all the particular doctrines neatly wrapped in a golden ribbon (according to the domination one is in at the time) and your lifestyle is in accordance with their standard you are saved. This is not how Paul views salvation, rather he sees Christ as the foundation, whoever is building their life on this foundation and trusting in Christ is saved to eternal life, and will be rewarded according to how they have built on that foundation

(i.e., with gold, silver, precious stones or with wood, hay or straw). This clearly shows that within the global body of Christ not all behaviour nor all teachings are going to be as we might think they should, but this does not mean that a person is not saved to eternal life, but it might mean they will suffer loss since Paul tells us what is good will be rewarded accordingly and warns us that what is bad in a brother or sisters life will be judged accordingly (i.e., some will suffer loss while others will be rewarded).

Nevertheless all who are building their life on the foundation should be counted as brothers and sisters in Christ since they will be saved to eternal life despite the fact they might still be feeding on milk, acting in a human manner and living their life in a worldly fashion as were those in the Corinthian church, Paul never cast doubt on their salvation since he always refers to them as brothers and sisters in Christ, but he did view them as infants in the family who had never grown up.

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## 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-20

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### You are God's Temple.

- **1 Corinthians 3:16-20:** Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? <sup>17</sup>If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. <sup>18</sup>Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. <sup>19</sup>For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," <sup>20</sup>and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

This is one of the greatest battles of the Christian life and for the spiritual mind, Paul states we are God's Temple and that His Spirit dwells in us, yet our mortal corrupted and fallen mind tends to focus on the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that dwell within us and constantly reminds us that we fall far short of the standard of perfection we feel we have to achieve before we can even consider ourselves as being a temple of God, but contrary to what our mortal, fallen and natural mind may think it is not our self-effort in achieving what we consider acceptable to God that is counted as our righteousness but our faith in Christ, it is our faith in God's Son that God counts as our righteousness. This is one of the reasons the Gospel of Christ is called the Good News.

**Christian spirituality contrasted to new age spirituality:** it is interesting to contrast Christian spirituality with New Age spirituality, most New Age teaching rely on entering a mental mindset that transcends this world, this can take many months of practise, whereas eternal salvation is instant, the moment a person humbly comes to Christ in repentance their life, ambitions and passions will be changed, but as it is in New Age spirituality changing the mindset to behold themselves as the temple of God will for some take many years as the natural thinking of our mortal human mind is to focus on our own flaws rather than what God's word says about us and our faith.

**Those that destroy brothers and sisters in Christ God will destroy:** Paul says, "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him" (v17). This verse is sometimes used to condemn those in Christ who eat unhealthy foods, smoke, drink too much, live contrary to God's ways etc., but this is not the context of the verse, rather it is referring to those who mock, persecute or harm those who belong to Christ in anyway.

**If anyone thinks they are wise let them become a fool that they may be wise:** to understand Paul's words, "If anyone thinks they are wise in this age, they should become a fool that they may become wise" (v18) it needs to be noted that wise in this context does not refer to the wisdom the book of Proverbs tell us all to seek after but rather carries the idea of a person who is smug, prideful, egotistical, conceited and self-

righteous (i.e., those who see themselves wise in their own eyes). Paul is saying they should lay aside their prideful wisdom and humble themselves and accept the Good News of the Gospel and then they will have wisdom that leads to eternal life contrasted to their worldly wisdom that leads to eternal death.

**The wisdom of this world:** the words, "The wisdom of this world is folly with God" (v19) do not refer to every teaching of the secular world, since much of what the world has learned is not only true, but adds to human life and the well-being of us all. The wisdom of the world that God considers foolishness is that belief that they can attain to righteousness by their own self-effort, i.e., keeping the Law of Moses, religious ceremonial feasts and holy days etc., or by doing good works since we all have sinful inward aberrations and dysfunctions that limit us from ever attaining to God's perfect standard of Holiness and therefore to believe we can be righteous by our own efforts is not only vain, but a manifestation of extreme self-righteousness and shows a total lack of understanding the enormity of God's Holy Standard. All the thoughts of those who consider themselves wise in being righteous and acceptable to God for eternal life without belief in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ are futile since God knows our inner thoughts and the motives of our heart and therefore any attempt to think we can be righteous by our own efforts is pure vanity (meaning futile).

**NOTE:** if anyone thinks they can by their own self-efforts attain to the righteousness acceptable to God see:

- Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21-48).
- In Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

And measure yourself against the high standard Christ calls us all too.

**He catches the wise in their craftiness and their thoughts are futile:** the words, "He catches the wise in their craftiness" (v19) is cited from (Job 5:13). It means that those who are prideful, self-righteous and wise in their own eyes will be shown that they are not because God frustrates the plans and goals of the those who think they are wise and their end is eternal death in contrast to the wisdom of the humble who trust in Christ for their righteousness and who God gives hope and saves to eternal life and everlasting glory. While the words, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile" (v20) is cited from (Psalm 94:11) which is basically stating a similar thing i.e., the plans, goals and dreams of those who think they are wise in their own eyes are but vanity since their life is but a breath before the LORD, thus wisdom in God's eyes and in this context is that wisdom that leads to eternal life.

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## 1 CORINTHIANS 3:21-23

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### Let no-one Boast in Men.

- **1 Corinthians 3:21-23:** So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours <sup>22</sup>whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours <sup>23</sup>and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Paul in these verses is saying, Paul, Apollos and Cephas and by extension all leaders of the Christian faith belong to all in the global body of Christ and that all good things of the world are our inheritance since in Christ we have conquered eternal death and will be granted eternal life and therefore we should live in this present age with this amazing hope knowing that all things will be ours in the glorious future age when the Lord returns as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his millennial reign. In the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-5) the dead in Christ and the faithful,

who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory.

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**For further information see titles:**

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*